

Chinese May Pay Twice to See *Kung Fu Panda 3*

Katzenberg bets on a unique Mandarin version to boost curiosity (and profits) for the Asia-friendly threequel By Patrick Brzeski

WITH THE THIRD FILM IN THE *Kung Fu Panda* franchise set for a day-and-date China release Jan. 29, DreamWorks Animation has taken a novel approach to wringing more money from the country's favorite Hollywood franchise.

Central to *KFP3*'s fortunes in China is an ambitious two-version production and release plan. The movie, a co-production with the state-run China Film Group, was created in English- and Mandarin-language versions, but unlike the usual approach — whereby a voice cast of local stars is recruited to record a dub over the U.S. version — the *KFP3* characters' mouths and body language were animated twice to match the nuances of both languages. "You'll have to see it twice to compare the differences between the English and Chinese versions," DWA CEO **Jeffrey Katzenberg** told an industry crowd Dec. 12 in the city of Sanya. "But twice is not enough," he added to laughter from several hundred Chinese cinema chain managers at the event. "You'll actually have to see it a third time to decide which is your favorite."

Sources at DreamWorks say Katzenberg wasn't entirely joking: The studio indeed hopes curiosity leads many Chinese viewers to see both versions, hence the dual wide releases in the market. The team at Oriental DreamWorks, the company's China arm, is taking no chances, giving the **Alessandro**



Characters in the Mandarin version of *KFP3* were given Chinese mannerisms and body language.



Katzenberg

Carloni- and **Jennifer Yuh-**directed movie wall-to-wall local marketing exposure to raise awareness of the two versions.

Whether moviegoers will pay to see the film twice remains to be seen, but Katzenberg's effort to entrench Oriental DreamWorks within the notoriously insular Chinese film industry could pay off in a big way. The first *Kung Fu Panda* grossed \$26 million in China in 2008, an unheard-of performance when the local box office remained undeveloped. In 2011, *Kung Fu Panda 2* pulled in \$92.2 million and became the market's highest-grossing animated film to date.

"The dual-language authoring should maximize box-office potential for the film," says **Rance Pow**, founder and president of the Shanghai-based cinema consulting firm Artisan Gateway. "We'll be watching *KFP3*'s run into its second week and beyond for signs the audience has an appetite for both versions. The DWA franchise has been well received in China and has a strong fan base. The film looks teed up to break mainland records." **THR**